

# Aircraft Operations Group Meets in Reno for Annual Conference

By Mark Woodbury, Associate Editor

**D**efense Contract Management Agency's Aircraft Operations met in Nevada's "Biggest Little City" March 19-22 for its annual conference to discuss various issues affecting DCMA aviators.

This year's conference theme, "Customer Focus, Enabling Our Troops to Succeed," was chosen to reiterate to AO employees the importance of doing their part

to get warfighters what they need to succeed on the battlefield.

The conference included attendee sessions featuring subject experts who offered insights into dealing with matters that affect the AO community while focusing on success in supporting warfighters. Breakout sessions were offered after conference sessions, allowing AO members to discuss topics unique to their specialties.

The conference also allowed attendees to reflect on DCMA's safety record during a one-day safety stand down. Briefings given by service safety center representatives focused on the importance of safety in

everything the agency does. Air Force Lt. Col. Tim Nickerson, AO director of safety, then provided a recap of 2006's mishaps and resulting lessons learned in the interest of preventing future problems.

A change in this year's conference schedule included an additional day at the beginning of the conference to assist enlisted AO members with their professional development. "Mr. Ernst and I felt it was necessary for our enlisted personnel to be given the opportunity to discuss issues pertinent to their personal and professional growth and development," said Air Force Chief Master Sgt. Terrence Woodley, DCMA senior enlisted adviser. "Adding an additional day to the conference for the enlisted members seemed the most practical way to accomplish this."

Looking back, Woodley feels the objectives for the extra day were met, and he is currently in the process of making additional changes to next year's enlisted day agenda to further assist AO's enlisted force.

In addition to providing an opportunity to discuss enlisted-related issues with the agency's leadership, the conference also gave one AO member the chance to network with people who work in situations similar to his. "This is

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**(Background)** The Aircraft Operations seal highlighted behind the conference speakers' podium. (Photo by Mark Woodbury, DCMA Public Affairs)

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*— Navy Capt. David Moroney*



the only time of the year [when] I can network face-to-face with people in my field throughout the entire agency,” said Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Jeff Benham, DCMA Lockheed Martin Marietta, Ga., aviation maintenance manager. “In my line of work, getting the opportunity to discuss issues with people who do what I do day in and day out is invaluable.”

For another AO employee, having the opportunity to better understand AO’s makeup while familiarizing himself with the people who oversee operations at the headquarters level was helpful. “It is always beneficial when you understand the system and how the parts compose the whole within the system,” said Air Force Maj. Efrain Gonzalez, DCMA Lockheed Martin Marietta, Ga., government flight representative.

Navy Senior Chief Thomas Kirchner, aircraft maintenance manager for DCMA Boeing in

St. Louis, appreciated being able to get a better perspective of where AO is going and his part within that vision.

AO leaders, in turn, expressed gratitude for what they learned from conference attendees. “I am grateful that so many people offered their suggestions and insights during the conference,” said Navy Capt. David Moroney, AO director. “My team and I were able to bring back a lot of good information we feel will assist AO as a whole.”

After listening to conference attendees, Moroney had the impression that everyone who attended was able to gain something positive out of the experience. “Many people I spoke with said it was the best conference ever,” he said. “With the recommendations we got from this year’s conference, we hope we will hear the same from next year’s attendees.” C

**(Top Left)** Keith Ernst, DCMA acting director, speaks to AO enlisted troops during an AO conference breakfast March 20. The breakfast gave enlisted troops the opportunity to ask the director questions regarding their careers and professional development.

**(Top Right)** Air Force Lt. Col. Timothy Nickerson, AO director of safety, discusses AO safety mishaps and recommended safety changes during his address to conference attendees March 21. (Photos by Mark Woodbury, DCMA Public Affairs)